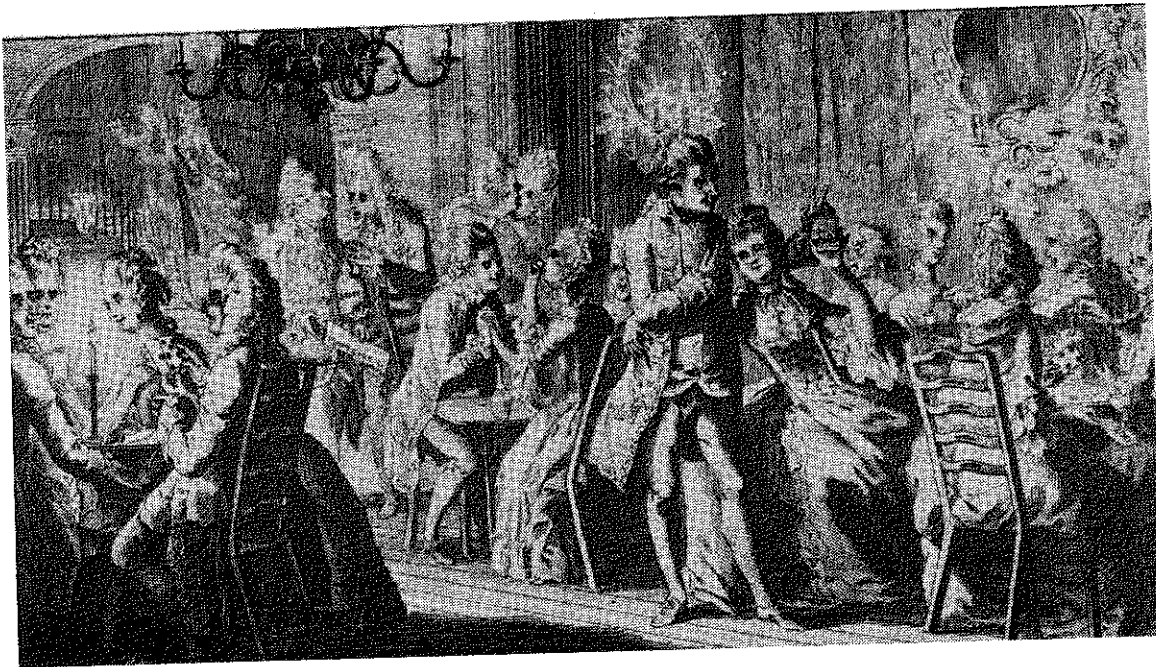


# Disseminating Scruples



People are talking about **semi-otics**, that perky little science of sign systems . . . or more to the point, people are talking about **semioticians**, the rich and famous of the academic conference set, particularly those who dropped into Toronto in June for the ninth **International Summer Institute for Semiotic and Structural Studies** (that's **ISISSS** to you).

*More stars than . . .* And who better to be "liaison officer" (that's chief starfucker to the rest of us) than well-known Toronto celebrity chaser and intimate of the famous "**Black Bart**" **Testa**?

*My lips are sealed* But they will make their needs known, won't they, these celebrities? Take (please!) nature girl **Luce Irigaray** . . . We all need a break from life in the fast lane, so everyone could understand Luce's demand for a house with a garden for the duration of the institute (after all, you can't smell the lime trees or feed the squirrels from the Park Plaza). And she was so gracious about it, unlike **Michel Foucault**, who several years ago thought his little *boite* so noisy that he demanded to be moved.

*Oh, oh, oh, oh.* But we found some of Luce's other quirks a bit less charming . . . Regular readers of *Border/Lines* may recall that she had announced she would refuse to speak English because it is "the language of imperialism" . . . That, it appears, was putting a positive gloss on it. After several outbursts at York prof **Barbara Godard**, who had rendered yeoperson service in translation, Luce threw sisterhood to the wind and adopted a pet boy as translator for the duration . . . it hardly mattered because only 12 people were attending her lectures at this point (not very surprising, since they'd already been published).



*French down our throats, part 2* Nor was this the only parole violation in the prison-house of language . . . people never stopped talking about the treatment meted out to *Border/Lines* contributor **Roland Le Huenen** by **ISISSS** generalissimo (and colleague in the U of T French Dept.) **Paul Bouissac** . . . After announcing that courses had to be given in English (take that, anti-imperialists!), Paul announced that Le Huenen's course had been cancelled.

*Master of the Circus* Who else, but the ebullient **M. Bouissac**? One night, he left the Institute building at 10:30, locking the door behind him . . . only to remember, at 12:30, that he had locked a group of semioticians inside . . . he returned, to find them with their faces pressed despairingly against the glass . . . unlocking the door, he quipped, "What, no panic sex?"

*Panic Sex, '87*  
*World Tour* Top marks to **Arthur Kroker** . . . after knocking them dead on the American conference circuit, Kroker blew into town to bring the house down at the **ISISSS** colloquium on "The semiotics of eroticism" with his "Panic Sex" paper . . . the video is due any day now . . . And can anyone confirm the rumour that York honcho **John O'Neill** was livid because Kroker had been the *succes de scandale* in this spring's academic skin trade?

And anyway, not much else was cooking on the eroticism front . . . Toronto's own **Robin Wood**, self-appointed bad boy of film theory, was ever-transgressive, showing us a clip

from the banned-in-**Zum Klo**, and pronounced children's lifetime" swimming in the w polymorphous perv won't be around to

But the coll redeeming momen types **John Greysor** and **Richard Fung** out 50 bucks, think going to get a chan who were looking the end of the wee

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*Dave Paparazzi*

from the banned-in-Ontario *Taxi Zum Klo*, and promising that "in my children's lifetime" we'd all be swimming in the warm waters of polymorphous perversity . . . sorry you won't be around to dive in, Robin!

But the colloquium had a few redeeming moments . . . just ask SoHo types **John Greyson**, **Colin Campbell**, and **Richard Fung**, who each shelled out 50 bucks, thinking they were going to get a chance to talk dirty, and who were looking pretty frustrated by the end of the weekend.

### *Systeme de la mode*

**Ann Marie Picard** (keep your eyes on this rising star, folks!) hit the nail on the head when she confessed to being more nervous about her clothes than about her speech . . . this isn't to say that ISISSS provided much big news from the front lines of the fashion wars . . . but heads were turned by **Arthur Kroker's** artfully wrinkled linen jacket ("Why bother with dry cleaning if the apocalypse is due any minute?" quipped one observer) . . . And everyone was sympathetic towards poor **Jacques Derrida** who obviously has to live out of a small suitcase . . . but we did find the seersucker suit and pink shirt a tad *ennuyeuse* after four days running.

### *Say it with rayon*

**Kaja Silverman** was the talk of the town for her fashion statements . . . we loved the summer frocks and the party shoes . . . but we were blown away by her outfit at the eroticism colloquium . . . black seamed stockings, rhinestone drop earrings, and a cocktail dress with black mesh atop (at 10:00 in the morning, no less!) . . . and this for a paper on male masochism! . . . **Paul Bouissac** fumbled repeatedly as he tried to find a place to pin the microphone.

### *The rich and famous*

Some people do it for love . . . but money helps. And the conference was abuzz with rumours about how much silver greased the palms of the big name stars . . . informed guesses are that **Derrida** topped the bill at \$12,000; **Irigaray** clocked in at \$9,000; **Teresa De Lauretis** banked \$8,000; and **Silverman** for many the star of the

show, pocketed a relatively measly \$4,000 . . . it's a dirty job, but . . .

### *Market quotes*

It was October 1929 for the York SPT Luce(ite) gang . . . if you're holding **Irigaray** shares, dump them fast before word gets around . . . **Derrida** held steady: a solid, blue chip investment; it probably won't yield the same spectacular rates of return as in the past, but as with Xerox, you'll never take a bath . . . **De Lauretis** shares are more risky: informed market analysts noted that production has failed to expand at the anticipated rate . . . But adventuresome futures speculators made a killing on **Silverman**: a relatively new stock, it offers an attractive package to investors who may be considering divestment from **Irigaray**.

But the real loser may have been **Semiotics** itself . . . observers noted that the hard semioticians in attendance were being traded like penny stocks in obscure gold mines . . . even such one-time heavy traders as **Greimas Inc.** were pushed to the margins . . . and the up-and-coming **artificial intelligence** market remains too unstable to call . . . stay tuned!

### *Choose me!*

**Choose Me!** Legend has it that Madonna spent a year dancing in front of the DJ at the Danceteria before she was "discovered". At ISISSS you had to work a lot harder to be noticed by the stars . . . there were the

novitiates who came into Derrida's seminar with carefully prepared questions that they danced by him until he, or they, collapsed, exhausted . . . there was the American academic who delivered a forty-five minute "sermon" (as Jacques dubbed it) in lieu of the ten he had been allocated . . . and then there was the ex-Toronto member of the feminist literati who cornered **Kaja Silverman** at a party and spent forty minutes describing her analysis to the obviously bored and silenced **Silverman** until rescue finally arrived.

### *Covering all bases*

"Among the 'screens' to be used are Kenneth Burke's concepts of logology and its applications in Augustinian semiotics as read by John Freccero, and Ignatian rhetoric as read by Roland Barthes; the theories of performative utterance, enunciation and speech en/actement of Austin, Searle, Greimas, and Benveniste; Paul Ricoeur's theory of processual mimesis and Frances Yates' reading of *ars memoriae* transcoded through Ong's theory of oral noetics and its cognates in Marcel Jousse's semiotics of gesture and liturgical enactment . . ." (**Lorraine Weir**, describing her course "Semiotics of the Joyce System".)

### *What is Semiotics?*

"Semiotics is whatever is interesting" (**Paul Bouissac**).

*Dave Paparazzi is an artist currently working in the university.*

